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ABSTRACT

The Latino population is the fastest-growing major racial/ethnic group in the United States. By 2020, approximately 16 percent of the population will be Latino. This increase will be even more pronounced among teens. This fact sheet summarizes data from the National Vital Statistics Reports on reported sexual activity, pregnancy rates, and contraception use of Latino teens. By 2020, one in five teens will be Latino. The overall teen pregnancy rates, and the rates for non-Hispanic white and black teens, declined throughout the 1990s. The Latina teen pregnancy rate decreased only 4.6 percent between 1990-97, while the overall teen pregnancy rate decreased 18.9 percent. Six out of ten U.S. Latina girls become pregnant at least once by age 20. Since 1994, Latina teens have had the highest teen birth rate among the major U.S. racial/ethnic groups. The 2001 birth rate for Latina adolescents was nearly double the national average. Latino youth report higher rates of sexual activity and lower rates of contraceptive use than the general teen population. Between 1988-95, contraceptive use at first sex decreased from 55 to 53 percent for Latina teens and increased from 65 to 71 percent for all teenage girls. Increases in the average proportion of times condoms were used by never-married Latino males in the previous year were significantly smaller than increases for the overall never-married teen population. (Contains 14 endnotes.) (SM)

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Teen Sexual Activity, Pregnancy and Childbearing Among Latinos in the United States

April 2003
The National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy

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THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

FACT SHEET

Teen Sexual Activity, Pregnancy and Childbearing Among Latinos in the United States

APRIL 2003

Highlights:

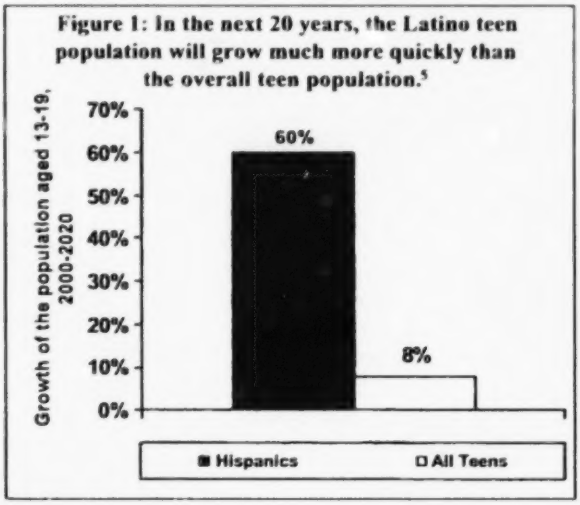
- The Latino population is the fastest-growing major racial/ethnic group in the United States.
- Six out of ten Latina girls in the U.S. become pregnant at least once by age 20.
- Latinas have the highest teen birth rate among the major racial/ethnic groups in the United States.
- The teen birth and pregnancy rates for Latinas have not decreased as much in recent years as have the overall U.S. teen birth and pregnancy rates.

Latinos and the U.S. Population

Latinos currently constitute approximately 13% of the total U.S. population.[1] In 2000, an estimated 1.4 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were Latina, approximately 14% of all 15- to 19-year-old girls.[2] Approximately 66% of the Latino population are of Mexican descent, 15% are of Central or South American descent, 9% are of Puerto Rican descent, 4% are of Cuban descent, and 6% are of other Latino origin.[3] According to the 2000 Census, 48% of Latinos are White, 2% are Black, 1% are Native American, less than 1% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 42% are "some other race," and 6% are mixed race.[1] Fifty-seven percent of Latino adults (aged 30 to 54) and 24% of Latino youth (aged 10 to 19) were born outside the U.S.[4]

The Latino population is the largest minority group and the fastest-growing major racial/ethnic group in the United States.[1,5] By 2020, approximately one-sixth (16%) of the U.S. population will be Latino. This increase will be even more pronounced among teens — over the next two decades, the Hispanic teen population will grow 60% while the total teen population will grow by only 8% (Figure 1). By the year 2020, 1 in 5 teens will be Latino.[5]

Figure 1: In the next 20 years, the Latino teen population will grow much more quickly than the overall teen population.[5]



Latina Teen Pregnancy Rates

The overall teen pregnancy rate (for teens aged 15 to 19) and rates for non-Hispanic White and Black teens have decreased throughout the 1990s. The Latina teen pregnancy rate decreased only 4.6% between 1990 and 1997 (latest year available), while the overall U.S. teen pregnancy rate decreased 18.9% during that

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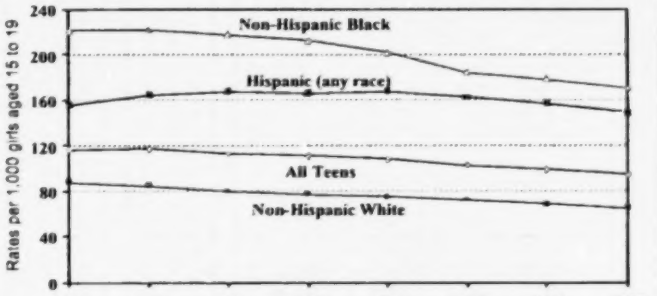
Figure 2: While the overall teen pregnancy rate decreased 19 percent between 1990 and 1997, the Hispanic teen pregnancy rate only decreased 5 percent during the same time period.[6]



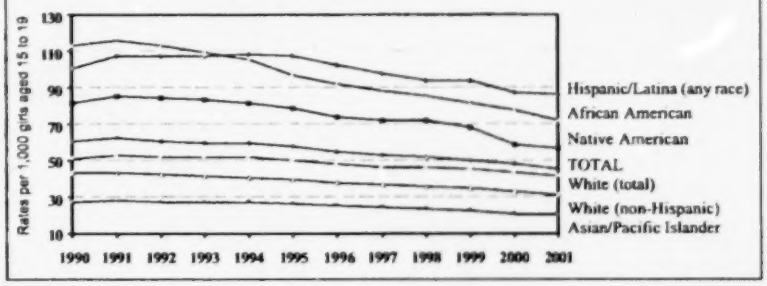
same time period (Figure 2). Unlike non-Hispanic White and Black teens, the pregnancy rate for Latina teens did not decrease consistently until 1994, but the decline in teen pregnancy rates for Latinas between 1994 and 1997 – 11.1% – closely mirrored the overall teen pregnancy rate decrease of 12.4% in the same time period.[6]

In 1997, Latina teens aged 15 to 19 had a pregnancy rate of 148.7 per 1,000, well above the national average of 94.3 per 1,000 15- to 19-year-old girls (but below the rate for African-American girls aged 15 to 19, 170.4 per 1,000).[6] While 4 in 10 girls in the U.S. become pregnant at least once as a teen, for Hispanic girls this proportion is 6 in 10.[7] In 1995, 19% of sexually experienced 15- to 19-year-old Latino males reported having caused a pregnancy, versus 14% of all sexually experienced males aged 15 to 19.[8]

Latina Teen Birth Rates

Since 1994, Latina teens have had the highest teen birth rate among the major racial/ethnic groups in the United States. The 2001 birth rate for Latina 15- to 19-year-olds was 86.4 per 1,000, nearly double the national rate of 45.3 per 1,000 (Figure 3). More than one-quarter of the births in 2001 to teens aged 15 to 19 were to Latinas.[9] The Latina teen birth rate is higher than the birth rate for African American teens, even though Latina teens have the lower *pregnancy* rate, because African-American teens are more likely than Latina teens to have an abortion.[6]

Figure 3: Since 1994, Latina teens have had the highest teen birth rate among the major racial/ethnic groups in the United States.[9]



Latina teen birth rates vary substantially from state to state: For the 42 states with Latino populations large enough to calculate birth rates in 1999, rates for teens aged 15 to 19 ranged from 33.8 per 1,000 in Louisiana to 219.0 per 1,000 in North Carolina (Figure 4).[10]

Teen birth rates also vary widely among Latino subgroups. Of the four subgroups for which rates were available in 2000, Mexican-Americans had the highest teen birth rate (101.7 per 1,000) among Latina 15- to 19-year-olds, followed closely by teens of Puerto Rican descent with a birth rate of 97.0 per 1,000. Latina

girls of "other/unknown" origin (including Central and South America) had the next highest teen birth rate (76.9 per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19). Cuban-Americans aged 15 to 19 had the lowest teen birth rate among these subgroups in 2000, 25.8 per 1,000 (Figure 5).[9]

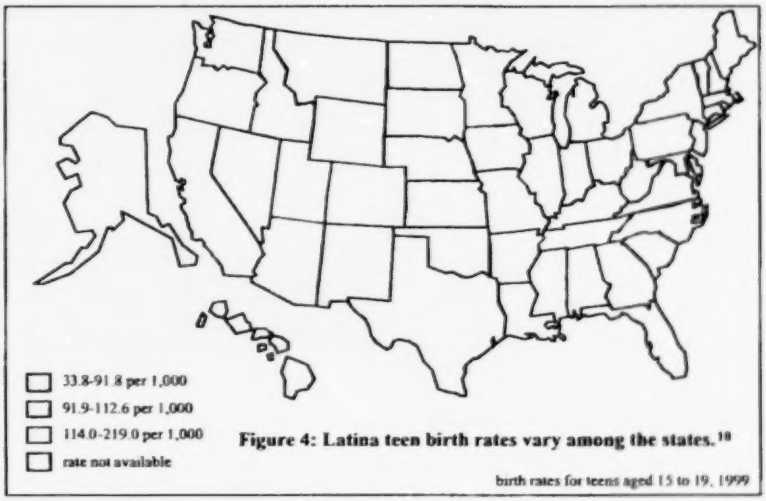


Figure 4: Latina teen birth rates vary among the states.[10]

Although the percentage of births to Latina teens that are nonmarital is less than the national average, the majority of Latina teen mothers give birth out-of-wedlock (Figure 6). In 2001, 72.1% of Latina teens aged 15 to 19 who gave birth were unmarried, versus 78.9% of all teens aged 15 to 19 who gave birth.[9]

The birth rate for Latina teens is decreasing, but not as much as the birth rate for all teens. Between 1991 and 2001, the overall birth rate for 15- to 19-year-old girls dropped 27.1%. During the same time period, the teen birth rate for Hispanic girls aged 15 to 19 decreased 19.0% (Figure 3).[9] Declines in teen birth rates between 1991 and 2000 varied among the major Latino subgroups — the teen birth rate for Mexican-Americans decreased 13.3% and the birth rate for teen girls of "other/unknown" Latina descent decreased 12.7%, while the birth rates for Cuban-Americans teen girls and Hispanic teens of Puerto Rican descent decreased only 6.9 and 5.6%, respectively.[9] Of the 38 states with Latina rates available for both 1991 and 1999, rates declined in 21 states; declines ranged from 1.2% in Illinois and Nevada to 31.9% in California. The teen birth rate for Latinas increased in the other 17 states, which saw rate changes ranging from a 3.4% increase in Florida to a 205.2% increase in Tennessee.[10]

Figure 5: Teen birth rates vary among Latina subgroups.[9]

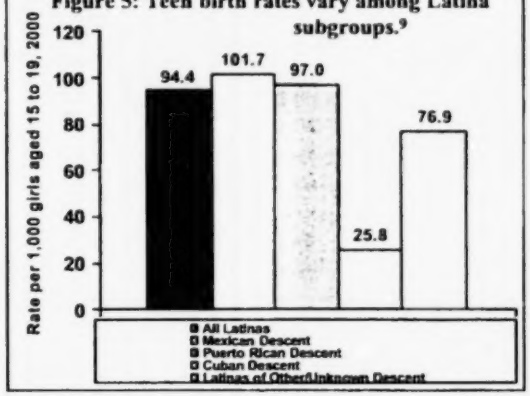
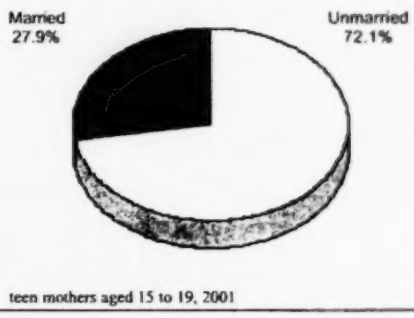


Figure 6: The majority of Latina teen mothers are unmarried.[9]



Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use

Latino youth report higher rates of sexual activity and lower rates of contraceptive use, compared to the general teen population. In 1995, 51% of all girls aged 15 to 19 and 49% of unmarried girls aged 15 to 19 reported ever having had sexual intercourse. Rates for Latinas in the same age bracket were slightly higher than average: 56% of all Latina teen girls aged 15 to 19 and 52% of unmarried Latina teen girls aged 15 to 19 reported ever having had sexual intercourse.[11] A 1995 survey of teen males showed a similar pattern: 61% of Latino males aged 15 to 19 reported ever having sex, versus 56% of all males aged 15 to 19.[8] A 2001 survey of high school students found that 48% of Latino students were sexually experienced, compared to 46% of all students (Figure 7).[12] (Keep in mind that in-school surveys miss many Latinos – in 2000, 14% of Latinos aged 14-19 had dropped out of school.[13])

Figure 7: More Latino teens report ever having had sexual intercourse.[8,11,12]

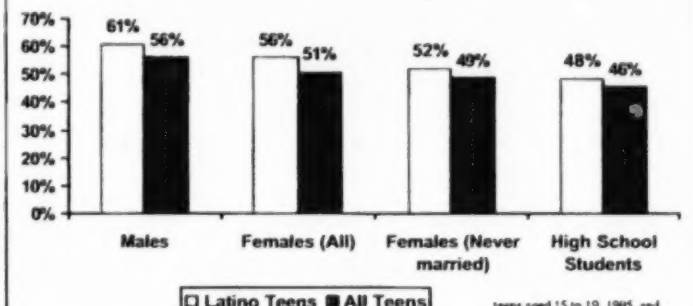
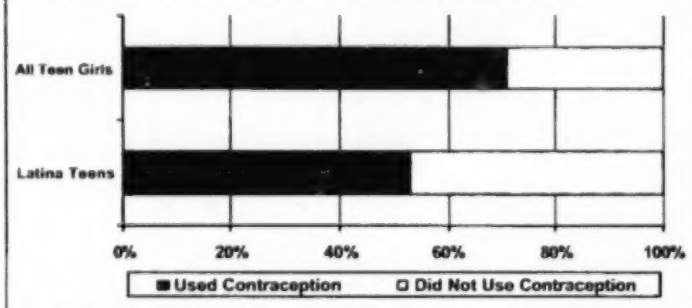


Figure 8: Fewer Latina teens report using contraception at first sex.[11]



In 1995, 47% of all Latina teen girls aged 15 to 19 reported that they did not use any form of contraception at first sex, versus 29% of all girls in this age bracket (Figure 8). Among *sexually active* teen girls aged 15 to 19 (those who reported having had sex in the past three months), 48% of Latinas reported that they did not use contraception the last time they had sex, versus 32% of all sexually active teen girls.[11] Also in 1995, only 29% of sexually active Latino males aged 15 to 19 reported using condoms consistently (100% of the time) in the previous 12 months, versus 44% of all sexually active teen males aged 15 to 19.[8] In 2001, 54% of Latino high school students used a condom at most recent sex, compared to 58% of all high school students.[12]

Between 1988 and 1995, the proportion of Hispanic girls aged 15 to 19 who had sex after menarche increased from 47 to 56%, while the proportion of all teen girls (aged 15 to 19) who had sex after menarche *decreased* from 53 to 51%. The same pattern held true for never-married teen girls aged 15 to 19: The proportion of Latinas who had sex after menarche increased from 45 to 52%, while this proportion for all female teens decreased from 51 to 49%.[11] Among never-married Latino males aged 15 to 19, the proportion who were sexually experienced increased slightly between 1988 and 1995 from 60 to 61%, while the overall proportion of never-married teen males who were sexually experienced decreased from 60% to 55%.[14]

Between 1991 and 2001, the proportion of all high school students who were sexually experienced decreased 16%, while the proportion of Hispanic students who were sexually experienced decreased 9%.[12]

Between 1988 and 1995, contraceptive use at first sex *decreased* from 55 to 53% for Latina teens aged 15 to 19 and *increased* from 65 to 71% for all teen girls aged 15 to 19. Contraceptive use at most recent sex decreased from 77 to 68% for all sexually active teens (those who reported having sex in the previous three months) and from 69 to 52% for sexually active Latina teens, in the same time period.[11] The average proportion of times condoms were used by never-married, Latino male teens in the previous year increased from 53 to 59% between 1988 and 1995. However, this increase was much smaller than increases in condom use for the overall (never-married) teen male population, which increased from 56 to 69%.[14] Condom use at most recent sex among Hispanic high school students increased from 37 to 54% between 1991 and 2001, more than it increased among all students (from 46 to 58%).[12]

NOTES

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10. Ventura, S.J., Mathews, T.J., & Hamilton, B.E. (2001). Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940-2000. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 49*(10).

11. Tabulations, 1988 and 1995 National Survey of Family Growth.

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FOUNDED IN 1996, THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY IS A PRIVATE, NONPROFIT, NONPARTISAN ORGANIZATION WITH A GOAL TO REDUCE THE TEEN PREGNANCY RATE IN THE UNITED STATES BY ONE-THIRD BETWEEN 1996 AND 2005.

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